

VZCZCXRO7370  
RR RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHGR RUEHGO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD  
RUEHRS RUEHTM  
DE RUEHDG #1624/01 3631828  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 291824Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0440  
INFO WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SANTO DOMINGO 001624

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS  
DEPT FOR CA/FPP

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [ASEC](#) [SMIG](#) [DR](#)  
SUBJECT: ARSO-I Led Team Breaks Up Visa Counterfeiting Ring with  
International Ties

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES 001203; B) SANTO DOMINGO 1606

1) (SBU) Summary: Recent anti-fraud efforts led by the Consular ARSO-I have resulted in 11 arrests, confiscation of equipment related to visa and other counterfeiting activities, and freezing of accounts and other assets of persons involved in the ring. The investigation into the Santiago-based ring benefited from a quickly-forged working relationship with local authorities, including the Public Prosecutor, who collaborated in the execution of various arrest and search warrants. The investigation is ongoing, with several of its principal targets still at large. End Summary.

-----  
-----  
BUENOS AIRES REPORTS, SANTO DOMINGO RESPONDS  
-----  
-----

2) (SBU) In mid-October, post's Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) reviewed information in ref A, describing how at least ten Dominican nationals carrying fraudulent visas in legitimate passports had tried to travel to the United States from Argentina's Ezeiza International Airport. Embassy Buenos Aires furthermore provided our FPU and ARSO-I with detailed information on the mala fide travelers. Most of the travelers arrived in Buenos Aires on the same flight and attempted to board US-bound flights a few days later. Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) checks showed that the visa foils had been issued originally in Lima then washed and reprinted somewhere else. The facts matched similar reports from DHS/CBP of Dominican nationals intercepted in Lima with laundered visas, as well as local interdictions in which washed Lima-issued foils were fraudulently reprinted to match persons using genuine Dominican documents.

3) (SBU) Previous investigations by our ARSO-I had revealed that that a visa counterfeiting ring was operating somewhere in the Santiago area. ARSO-I verified through GODR Immigration records that several of the mala fide travelers interdicted in Argentina had returned from Buenos Aires to their homes in the Dominican Republic. Tracing local addresses here, the ARSO-I, accompanied by the National Police (PN) officer assigned to the ARSO-I, and an FPU investigator traveled to the Santiago area on 14 DEC 2009. The first mala fide traveler identified for investigation resided in nearby Mao and the ARSO-I led team quickly forged a solid relationship with the prosecutors' office in that city. The embassy team obtained arrest and search warrants for the subject and went to his house, where police arrested him. The arrestee quickly identified the source of his counterfeit U.S. visa as Wilfredo Antonio Reynoso Minier (Reynoso) and said that his passport containing the counterfeit visa was in the counterfeiter's

house. The subject's subsequent criminal complaint against Reynoso served as the basis for the local prosecutor to issue arrest and search warrants against Reynoso and his property.

-----  
-----  
ALL THE DOCUMENTS FIT TO PRINT - VISAS, CURRENCY, CAR TITLES  
-----  
-----

4) (SBU) The search of Reynoso's house revealed significant evidence of his visa counterfeiting activities as well as evidence that he was also counterfeiting US currency and falsifying titles for stolen vehicles. Police found twenty US visas in various stages of being washed and converted into counterfeits. Ten of the eleven that were as yet unaltered and still attached to pages torn from their original passports had been issued in Peru. Also confiscated in the raid: an improvised pressure press; a US one dollar bill awash in a chemical bath with the ink approximately three-quarters faded away; a black light; two digital cameras; two computers; two printers; a fraudulent US Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) card; various ownership documents related to stolen vehicles; and a Peruvian passport #4210810 in the name of Armando Cesar Koo Escalante (Koo).

SANTO DOMI 00001624 002 OF 003

5) (SBU) Under questioning, family and other persons associated with Reynoso disclosed that a Peruvian citizen who had entered the country on October 26 was the actual forger of the documents, and Reynoso was their broker. From GODR Immigration records we learned that Koo Escalante has traveled to the Dominican Republic on various occasions, and his most recent entry was indeed October 26, 2009. The preliminary conclusion - that Koo Escalante is the forger, and he had been staying at the broker's house and working out of a guest bedroom since his arrival - was also confirmed by Reynoso's wife.

6) (SBU) Police here have charged Reynoso and Koo with organizing illegal travel, counterfeiting US visas, counterfeiting US currency, counterfeiting "cedulas" (local identity document) and falsifying vehicle licensing and sales documents. Both men remain at large despite an extensive manhunt, surveillance of their known associates and military checkpoints of all routes out of the region. Local law enforcement lookouts have been placed on the subjects and immigration holds are in place to prohibit their departure from the country. In addition, Reynoso's bank assets have been frozen and other property seized. Other documents indicate that Reynoso has used a second identity and possesses a cedula issued in the name of Robert Frias Paulino. (GODR authorities have issued lookouts, holds and seizures under this identity as well.)

-----  
-----  
ELEVEN ASSOCIATES ARRESTED SO FAR, AND EVIDENCE MOUNTS FOR MORE ARRESTS  
-----  
-----

7) (SBU) The bust of the Reynoso-Koo operation has led to the arrest of 11 individuals to date, even as its two namesakes remain at large. Those arrested include the original mala fide traveler, various members of Reynoso's family who refused to cooperate with local authorities, and other persons associated with and/or supporting the counterfeiting network. Reynoso's sister apparently served as title-holder for assets including bank

accounts, buildings, properties, and vehicles. Reynoso's wife attached her name to various fraudulent documents surrounding vehicle purchases and land titles. Reynoso's girlfriend provided storage space for a significant number of vehicle licenses and title documents since discovered by police. The girlfriend had also accompanied Reynoso on a trip to Lima. All of the eleven arrests were at the direction of local prosecutors.

8) (SBU) Interestingly, one of the Reynoso/Koo associates, Wilfredo Eloy Lopez Rosa (Lopez), was known to our FPU as a visa fixer, prominent enough, in fact, to have been pictured and identified on our "Buscones" poster (see ref B). Based on information tying him to this case, police executed arrest and search warrants for his home in Jamao al Norte on 23 DEC 2009. Five hours elapsed between the time of Lopez's arrest and the time these warrants could be processed, and when the ARSO-I and police search team arrived at Lopez's residence, they found that the house had been ransacked. One day later, back in the town of Mao, the jurisdictional judge imposed an extraordinary preventive custody order of one year's detention against Lopez, pending further investigation. Previous ARSO-I cases have seen holding periods never in excess of three months. While investigation is still ongoing, it is apparent that Lopez played an integral part in the counterfeiting and trafficking persons ring operated by Reynoso.

9) (SBU) While the embassy team was leading investigations in and around Mao, GODR Immigration stopped a passenger attempting to board a US-bound flight from Santiago using a counterfeit visa. The subject identified Persio Antonio Sanchez Almanzar (Sanchez) as the source of his counterfeit visa leading authorities to issue arrest and search warrants. In Sanchez's Santiago apartment authorities confiscated nine Dominican passports with counterfeit US visas along with various other documents and cash. FPU assisted

SANTO DOMI 00001624 003 OF 003

GODR Immigration in confirming that the visas were counterfeit. The visas fit the pattern of foils originally issued in Peru, washed, reprinted by counterfeiters, and placed in genuine Dominican passports. Sanchez reportedly admitted to distributing the fake documents, but claimed that the forgeries were done in Peru and then returned to the Dominican Republic.

10) (SBU) We have ample reason to expect that our ARSO-I investigation will reveal additional suspects and scams. Remaining to be analyzed are two computer hard drives from Reynoso's home which the local prosecutor released to our embassy team on 22 DEC 2009. The team then FedExed the hard drives to Washington, to the Computer Investigation and Forensics (DS/ICI/CIS) lab for analysis. The hard drives will be returned to the prosecutor as soon as analysis is complete and may still be presented in the cases against Reynoso, Koo and/or others. We anticipate that information from the hard drives will provide details into the network's operations and new leads for investigation both locally and internationally. Although both Reynoso and Koo are still at large, we hope that their eventual arrest and questioning will provide additional information about the international connections involved in this counterfeiting ring. ARSO-I continues to coordinate investigation with local officials and will remain in contact with colleagues in USG offices in Argentina and Peru throughout.

-----  
ONCE AGAIN, THE VALUE OF TEAMWORK  
-----

11) (SBU) Comment: Local authorities, particularly the public prosecutor's office in Mao, were extremely cooperative. The

embassy team was also supported by the local police as well as infantry soldiers under the authority of the Army General commanding the regional brigade. The embassy team, led by the ARSO-I and including an FPU Investigator and our vetted national police officer, was particularly well suited to develop local contacts and facilitate cooperation among the different parties involved in the operation. The ongoing investigation once again demonstrates the effectiveness of a well-coordinated team from FPU, DS and local authorities.

LAMBERT

Lambert